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WASHINGTON, D.C.- A new report (pdf) shows that while deaths from residential fires have been nearly cut in half from 4,500 in 1980 to 2,660 in 1998, those caused by candles have increased dramatically. Candle deaths increased 750 percent from 1980 (20 deaths)

to 1998 (170 deaths). In most cases, candles caused house fires when they were left unattended, tipped over and ignited nearby combustibles. Almost half of home candle fires start in the bedroom. Mattresses or bedding are the most common items that ignite, followed by furniture (dressers, desks, and tables) and then curtains. Tealights and tapers are common culprits in candle fires.

A child playing with the candle itself or near the candle is one of the biggest contributors to candle fires. Faced with fire, many children hide in a closet or under a bed leading to tragic fatalities. In fact, children under age 5 have a fire death rate more than twice the national average.

"Candles are no longer used for the occasional dinner party. In fact, only a small percent of candle fires start in dining rooms," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "Candle sales are booming and families are lighting candles in their living rooms, family rooms, dens and bathrooms. Fires from candles have increased dramatically, but they are preventable. Reduce the chance of a fire, by following CPSC's simple safety tips."

- Keep matches, lighters and candles away from children.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Keep combustible materials away from candles.
- Don't put candles in a location where children or pets could knock them down.
- Use only non-flammable candle holders.
- Always trim the wicks before lighting.

The new report shows that house fires have been dropped from 655,000 in 1980 to 332,300 in 1998, the latest year for which data is available. In contrast, house fires caused by candles have increased, from 8,500 in 1980 to 12,900 in 1998.

CPSC standards and compliance activities have contributed to the overall decline in fires and deaths. For example, CPSC's standard for child-resistant lighters has helped reduce fire deaths from children playing with lighters by 43 percent since 1994. Other CPSC standards include general wearing apparel, children's sleepwear, mattresses, and carpets and rugs. CPSC staff is working on standard proposals for upholstered furniture and for heating and cooking equipment. CPSC staff is also working with the candle industry to develop safety standards for candles to help reduce fires.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission protects the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death from 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov/talk.html>. For information on CPSC's fax-on-demand service, call the above numbers or visit the web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/103.html>. To order a press release through fax-on-demand, call (301) 504-0051 from the handset of your fax machine and enter the release number. Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

PROBLEM: The seats were sold without a seat belt, posing a risk to children who climb out of the seat.

INCIDENTS/INJURIES: Inglesina USA has received one report of a 10-month- old girl who fell from a table seat, and bruised her back.

This message has been compiled by the Section of Community Health & EMS (CHEMS), Alaska Division of Public Health and sent to subscribers of the AK-Prev and AHELP list-serves. It has also been sent as a "bcc" to others in Alaska including Public Health Centers, SAFE KIDS coalitions, Native Health organizations, and regional EMS Councils and Coordinators who may be interested and active in injury prevention and health promotion. The purpose is to share resources, breaking news, training opportunities, product recalls, and opinion to help prevent injuries to Alaskans. Feedback and contributions are encouraged. Contributions can be directed to Mary Krom: mary_krom@health.state.ak.us

link for the AK-Prev & AK-EMSC list-serve:
http://chems.alaska.gov/ems_list_servers.htm
link for the AHELP list-serve: <http://www.auroraweb.com/ahec/>

